

**APPROVED 01/10/2006**

PRESENT: Committee Members Charles Kimball, Marc Wood, Kevin Zukas, Joe Delahunty, Peg Pinkham, Donald Gates Jr, and Audrey Karamourtopoulos (7:15 pm); Town Administrator Heidi Carlson; and Public: Jeanne Nygren.

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 pm by Charles Kimball.

Motion was made by Wood and seconded by Zukas to approve the minutes for December 12, 2005 and December 20, 2005 as written. The vote was unanimously approved 7-0.

Members had reviewed the 2006-07 school budget and sat this evening to make a list of follow-up questions and other requested information to aid in the review. It was decided that the minutes would be used to generate the list of questions. Information available will be brought back to the next meeting, and time will be scheduled with school administrators at a future meeting.

References here are made to the 2006-07 proposed school budget binder:

Page 2 – With reference to providing computer laptops to all professional staff:  
How many laptops did we buy and where did the money come from?

Pinkham said that all of the teachers have laptops. The School is working toward going wireless in certain areas in the building. There was discussion about computers in every room.  
Who do we consider professional staff?

The Budget Committee is looking for more itemized description on some of the technical purchases. There was discussion about the replacement schedule and updating of these computers.

Audrey Karamourtopoulos arrived at 7:15 pm.

The computers are subject to inventory according to Pinkham. They can provide detail on how many there are, including what the district has purchased and what came from grants. Delahunty questioned what had been spent in the 2005-06 budget year on such computers.

Pinkham said they were cycled and that some computers were purchased every year. She said it could be obtained the information that pertained to proposed purchases this year (how many, for whom).

Questions were posed about whether or not a hard station was in each classroom. It was noted that students do also have access to a computer lab. It was questioned whether the laptops are docked in the classroom, and what the security around that is, as it could be accessed by students in the classroom if not properly protected.

Pinkham said she could get some definition from the technology specialist about the computers, the curriculum and how they are used. Pinkham thought that the specialist could provide much more technical information in this regard.

Delahunty discussed World Cultures being added to the Middle School last year – questions were asked about whether this was presented last year within the framework of the budget.

Pinkham said this was presented last year as part of language arts. This teaches social cultures and how the different cultures play a part in today's society. Pinkham used an example of health and food in other countries. This included students going to the cafeteria where there were different portions and types of food; and an indicator of proportions that might be available in a country, a Third World country. She said this was a very telling experience for many of the students.

She said it included civics, languages, and culture study. It had been proposed last year, though may have been called something of the language arts. No new position was created in this topic. She stated it helps to expose students to the world and society in general. It is a combination of language arts and social studies, including a lot of writing and research techniques as well. Members asked for more information on for the curriculum for World Studies to understand more about it and what it does.

Miller asked about the phone system, if the number of lines were increased? It was stated that last year's budget did include a phone being placed in every classroom, and this is currently in place. Pinkham said there are more lines in the building. The Committee would like a more detailed explanation of how the phone system works, how many phone lines there are, how many were added last year, and what is proposed for 2006-07. It was explained that there can be calls made out and in on these lines, and there has been an increase in calls in the hub.

There was discussion about the Web to school student database and Pinkham indicated it is in the process of being created/updated. There was discussion about the expansion to include the school lunch program, which will put that information (menus, etc) on the school website as well.

Page 7 - NE League of Schools is a consulting firm that the School Board is using, and they are conducting a study relative to middle school philosophy. Pinkham said that they did a total evaluation last year on curriculum, communications amongst administration, staff and students, effectiveness of curriculum choices, behavioral and emotional support for students at various levels. Overall it is about the education at Ellis School, how well it is received and how well it is provided.

There was discussion about the PBIS program, which is one of the components that came out of the study in prior years. Pinkham said that is an evolving process, considering recommendations, and monitoring how you are addressing them. She said that some of these programs can take 3-5 years to play out from the initial set of recommendations, and that it is a constantly moving process.

There were differing opinions expressed about how children are recognized for their improvements and positive behavior system. There was discussion about the PBIS program and

the motivations associated with it. Pinkham said the program is supposed to outline logical consequences and behaviors and those who are doing well are recognized for it.

Pinkham indicated that another factor in the program is education for teachers and staff as well, as this is a new method of teaching and disciplining. The other learning curve here is that society is not always fair. The administration is trying to get the system as close to “standardized” as is humanly possible. Pinkham said the system may never be fully perfect, but that it will continue to improve. There is always a human element. There is a wide range of children in the classroom and greater diversity on all fronts. Pinkham indicated the school is approximately one and a half years into the program, and it typically takes 3-5 years for teachers to have it become automatically part of their routine and teaching system.

Page 8 – Delahunty said he had heard a lot of talk about kindergarten. He questioned how much time, energy, and money is being spent on planning for kindergarten? Pinkham said there were no plans to come forward this year with kindergarten. Pinkham said they are monitoring standards for future kindergarten, but that it will not happen in 2006-07. No mandate has come forward yet requiring kindergarten, but that the State is saying it will be part of the overall state requirements at some point.

There were questions about aligning the Fremont curriculum with that of Sanborn. Pinkham said that too was an ongoing process. She indicated Sanborn has had some setbacks this year due to losing two superintendents, currently on an interim 3<sup>rd</sup> superintendent, the Business Administrator left after the principal left, and they are focusing on working hard on the hiring process.

She said that Ellis is working on aligning their curriculum with the Sanborn curriculum, and that Sanborn has been impressed with what they have seen from Fremont’s reading and writing program, and the math is pretty well-aligned as well.

Karamourtopoulos asked Pinkham to comment on the 10 year article that was written in the newspaper recently. Pinkham said that the article is not true. She indicated that Marian Guidoboni had never spoken to the reporter; and Adam Leech met with the School Board and apologized for the article. Pinkham said they played catch-up with the addition given the years of trying to get up to speed, and everyone acknowledged this.

Pinkham added that kids are now out of the halls, art is in a classroom, as is music. The School Board said they can make the building work for 10 more years, and they are committed to doing so. They have added one class already this year. Pinkham said year to year the population changes, and that it is looked at on that basis. There may be something in three to four years in line with population increases. Pinkham said that there could certainly be some further future bumps in population. She said yes to the question is the building being fully utilized; and no to is the building bursting full now. She said the person who wrote the article did not fully understand the situation, and he later met with the School Board to discuss it further.

Pinkham said that no one has come to the School Board about that article, and said that the Board has open time at all of their meetings for the public. Karamourtopoulos said she thought that the School Board should have written an editorial to dispute the article published.

Miller asked if we were working with Sanborn for a cooperative middle school and Pinkham said that they are considering a cooperative effort for all through grades, 1-12.

Pinkham thought that the cost benefit and educational benefit would make the argument for those future decisions. She feels the majority will look at the weights of both cost and educational benefit in making a decision about cooperative efforts.

Page 14 – Questions were asked about retirement and why we pay for two plans. There was discussion about NH Retirement and FICA and why both were paid? Who is eligible and what are the portions?

Page 14 – Line 5650 - Computers – software in many categories? Questioned about whether they have to buy separate packages. Pinkham said that in some cases they do have to buy individual licenses. Pinkham can obtain the number of licenses for each software program and the types of software used.

Page 15 – A question was asked about the asterisks used in the salary schedule and what those mean. There is no key to indicate what it stands for.

Page 16 – Delahunty questioned “New music 50%”. Pinkham said this was a request for a secondary part-time music teacher. The School Board did not approve that request; along with another second grade teacher, which was also not approved by the School Board.

Miller asked for a breakdown of number of students, and this was located on page 9 of the budget report; with current enrollments located on page 11. A further question was asked about the number of children per classroom. Pinkham said that she had it, but it will be located for the next meeting. Pinkham said that they try to keep first and second grade enrollment per class under 20.

In response to a question, Pinkham explained that “transition” is a first grade. These are students in more of a transitional role, who may be at a different stage of the calendar year than the school year. Annually they take one classroom with a like curve of children within their social and educational window. This transitional classroom is sometimes smaller than the average first grade. Each child is identified and placement is geared to individual needs. This is done more at the first grade level than any others.

Delahunty asked for a breakdown of cost per student at Ellis School for the past three years. Pinkham said that the factors involved in cost per student are helpful to the discussion as well. Pinkham said she would provide the costs as well as what is included in the calculations.

Page 19 – Health insurance and health stipend – what is the health stipend? Pinkham said it is paid for those who opt out of the District's health insurance. This is an incentive. Miller questioned the cost of the package opted out of. (A calculation of the actual benefit package cost over the stipend paid). There are four employees who receive the stipend.

Dental insurance is being offered to the paraprofessionals. In response to a question at another meeting, Pinkham said paraprofessionals work 6.5 hours per day. The full-time paraprofessionals work 32.5 hours per week and get dental insurance but not medical in accord with their negotiated contract.

With negotiated contracts, all members must be offered the same benefit package. There was discussion about the union and portions paid by member employees and the District.

Gates questioned the percentages paid by other districts wondering if Fremont is comparable. Pinkham mentioned Chester and how they had negotiated changes in benefits for an increase in salary. Pinkham said that there is some competition with Massachusetts borders due to a better salary and benefits package in the State of Massachusetts.

Delahunty stated that there had been a 15% increase in students from 2002-03 through the projections for 2006-07; and a 90% increase in regular education costs in that period.

Pinkham said they begin negotiating the teacher contract again next year; and paraprofessionals the following year.

Miller questioned whether negotiations had started again yet and Pinkham said no. Miller further indicated that the benefit costs are traditionally a large part of that. He referred to prior bargaining cycles where lower salaries were negotiated in place of keeping better health benefits and coverage. There was discussion about the taxpayer paying the bill for this, and that ultimately the health insurance companies make the money.

Page 27 – What are extended year salaries? Pinkham said these are summer teachers.

What is Tuition Non-NH public? It is tuition paid out of state. Pinkham said that in the past there has been a placement in Connecticut, one in Massachusetts. Depending on the amount of funding listed, it could include residential placement. Pinkham will find out about the out of district placement projections and the number of students in other facilities, and for how long a duration this is.

What is Tuition – Private? Pinkham thought this is probably out of district placement, but in NH. Why is it designated this way? Delahunty said his understanding that this is a line item for already determined placements, to determine what is needed for the individual IEP. The descriptions on page 31 were consulted for further detail on these placements. Pinkham said she will get the further detail on the special education placements.

Pinkham said that the out of district placements were based on individual IEP's and are approved or not, by the School Board upon recommendation of the Special Education Director

To further the questions on line 5564-00, it was questioned the breakdown of grades 1-8 versus high school placement numbers.

Page 28 – Delahunty asked for a better clarification of the Home to School Coordinator position. This is Glenn Kazan's position and what it entails. This position is fully grant-funded for perhaps up to three years. He works directly with students on a daily basis, is involved with court issues involving children in school, and involved with the Police Department and other programs as well. Miller asked for his job description as well as a copy of the grant. He has been paid as a counselor in prior years. This is his third year with the District.

Carlson explained a situation that Kazan had worked with the Town once, regarding a family who need social services and assistance services as well.

Delahunty talked about a position that had been eliminated and then "transferred" to the Home School Coordinator position. Pinkham said that there are some swapping and transferring of job duties. Pinkham said she considered Kazan as a teacher/counselor.

Prior to the Home to School Coordinator being hired, the District contracted with someone from Portsmouth for the position, for less time (three days per week).

Special Education Director – Who is it and what do they do? Pinkham explained that Gina Genest (last year classified at a different title) does much of this. Dawn Lewis is still hands on (but is now a principal.) Many children are identified early for special education. Gina Genest's title in the last year budget was Out of District Coordinator. This changes for the coming year.

Pinkham said that there was a listing of positions and transition titles, and she will get this for the Committee.

Would the Out of District Coordinator be responsible for placements at Sanborn, for instance?

Page 30 – Zukas questioned that there were two paraprofessionals listed here who have health insurance paid. These two people are grandfathered and specified within the union contract. They had these benefits prior to the union for paraprofessionals.

It was estimated that there are some 85 teachers at Ellis School. In response to earlier questions, much of the computer information was located as listed on page 61.

Page 61 - There was an analysis done last year for a technology plan. There were questions about why there had not been a reduction in the amount requested for last year. Karamourtopoulos had the technology plan from the prior year and it was reviewed. Pinkham will get the information on all breakdowns for the computers (type, location, size and usage, etc). Delahunty said that in looking at last years budget, there is a request for \$160,000 including \$60,000 for the computer tech salary. Delahunty questioned where the computers came from, given the prior year expense (with a plan of one style and an actual expense of other items).

Pinkham said that the next time the Board and Administration is available is on January 17 and then on January 24<sup>th</sup>. The Budget Committee will plan to meet and discuss this further next week, and have the administrators and business people in at the subsequent two meetings as necessary.

Page 34 – Questions about a 100% increase in the athletics page. The extracurricular salaries line is increased. (From page 36, this includes stipends per the collective bargaining agreement. It would also add two after school tutor to provide remedial instruction for regular education students in Language Arts and Math, three days per week.

There were questions asked about whether or not students stay after school for this program and if the teacher would still receive the stipend. Pinkham will check into the program and its mandates. Particularly this includes tutorial support, including English. Pinkham deferred for further explanation to Barbara Munsey at a future meeting. This also got into another section of the budget where English as a second language.

A breakdown of field maintenance was also requested given that the Town's maintenance worker has done the mowing of the fields. Pinkham said the fertilizing, etc had been bid out with three proposals received. She will get further information on these services.

Page 38 – Delahunty questioned a \$52,000 increase in the Guidance salary. Pinkham said that she was going to get out a list of changes in positions (in advance of the next meeting). This is accounted for with a position change. Pinkham said she would have Martha Williamson get the full list of positions and changes in order to help explain the budgetary line changes. There was discussion about the positions and how they are classified (ie: Special Education versus Guidance budgets).

Other increases were noted in this budget, including test scoring services. Delahunty questioned what the increase was for. Pinkham said these are tests that the District has to provide. The costs include the test booklets and grading among other things.

The rationale on page 40 refers to supplies at \$300 and the spreadsheet on page 38 lists \$3,000. It is believed there is a typographical error in the spreadsheet and that it is likely the budget number is supposed to be \$300.

There is testing required at both the Federal and state level. Pinkham said she would get together a list of the testing required, from where, and the pertinent costs associated.

Miller questioned the information brought forth by Bob Dodge regarding grants last year, for testing services in relation to No Child Left Behind. At that time, that specific grant issue had not been funded, but Pinkham said that Fremont has applied for eligible grants at this time. Delahunty asked about the format or style of testing and do we have other alternatives?

Committee members questioned the NEWEA testing and what it entailed (testing materials, type of grading, etc)?

Page 41 – Nurse salary – questioned whether the Nurse was part of the collective bargaining unit. Pinkham will verify this.

Kimball moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 pm. Miller seconded. The vote was unanimously approved 8-0.

The next meeting will be held at 7:00 pm on Tuesday January 10, 2006.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Carlson  
Town Administrator